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ABSTRACT

This description of the accomplishments and shortcomings of one school desegregation plan provides insights into much broader dialogue on the role of race in America. St. Louis (Missouri) and its suburbs demographically resemble many midsized contemporary metropolitan areas in the United States. What makes St. Louis unique is an urban-suburban school desegregation plan that has blurred but not erased the color line between white and black communities. The story of school desegregation across city-county borders illustrates how truly separate and unequal society has become and how difficult it is for the education system to change that. The struggles of St. Louis through its vulnerable school desegregation plan show how difficult change is and why the struggle is worth making. St. Louis may be in a better position to face the 21st century than are most other metropolitan areas. The freedom whites have had to segregate themselves in the suburbs has seemed innocuous but has lead to the creation of a highly segregated society. This 5-year study has used interviews with more than 300 educators and members of the public to show the color line in America. The first part of the book, "The Politics of Race," presents a broad historical overview. The second part,"The City," looks at the desegregation plan from the black side of the color line. Part III, "The Suburbs," presents the story of the desegregation plan from the other side. The final chapter offers some recommendations for improving desegregation in St. Louis, where all but 2 of the 16 suburban districts receiving the city's students have enrollments that are at least 15% black. (Contains 4 figures, 7 tables, and 308 references.) (SLD)

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